

Civilian Research Project USAWC Fellow

Regional SOF Coordination Center: An Indo-Asia-Pacific Approach

by

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Abstract

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The U.S. President's strategic directive and focus on addressing the challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, reinforced by DoD's strategic guidance, warrants an innovative approach and a new organizational construct to assist in aligning objectives and harmonizing activities in a joint, interagency, and multinational environment within the region. A Regional SOF Coordination Center (RSCC) will afford the U.S. a capability and venue to provide multinational SOF and security force education and training, enhance coordination, collaboration and interoperability, and establish new security partnerships, while reinforcing key regional security alliances to address the current and future threats, challenges, and opportunities within the Indo-Asia-Pacific arena. This paper will review and evaluate the RSCC concept and provide a recommended approach for establishing an RSCC for the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

Regional SOF Coordination Center: An Indo-Asia-Pacific Approach

As President, therefore, I have made deliberate and strategic decision – as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends.

— President Obama to the Australian Parliament, Canberra,
Australia, November 17, 2011

Our senior leaders, and those responsible for national security and policy, understand the Indo-Asia-Pacific region drives and influences global economic, military, demographic, and geopolitical patterns and trends. U.S. national interests and aspirations, and those of other regional powers, will continue to manifest, intersect, and contest in the Indo-Asia-Pacific arena. The U.S. strategic rebalance is a “natural outgrowth of a changing strategic environment,”¹ and presents opportunities to advance and protect U.S. interests and objectives, while ensuring the region remains peaceful, stable, and prosperous. However, the U.S. strategic rebalance, juxtaposed with today’s fiscal constraints, military downsizing, and a dynamic region, create a new strategic reality, in which multilateral collaboration, building partner capacity, and burden sharing become more attractive and necessary for the U.S. and Indo-Asia-Pacific nations to collectively address shared threats and challenges.

As the U.S. sets out to shape the Indo-Asia-Pacific environment, this reality will drive our strategic and operational choices, especially in a region unfavorable toward unilateral action and limited by multilateral cooperation. In *Foreign Policy*, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recognized the “complex transnational challenges of the sort now faced by Asia requires a set of institutions capable of mustering collective action.”² As stated in new Defense Strategic Guidance, the U.S. will “emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security [and] develop

networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.”³

The President’s directive, upheld by diplomatic and defense guidance, warrants a new, creative construct and approach in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. A Regional Special Operations Forces Coordination Center (RSCC) will assist the defense component of the U.S. strategic rebalance, improve multinational coordination, and align security cooperation activities in a dynamic joint, interagency, and multilateral environment. It will embody the new defense imperative for “innovative, low-cost, and small footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives,”⁴ and afford the U.S. government (USG) a standing, multilateral platform in the region to provide Special Operation Forces (SOF) education and training, enhance interoperability, and pursue new security relationships, while strengthening existing alliances to address current and over-the-horizon threats and challenges.

Each section of this paper concentrates on an aspect of the RSCC and is presented so the main ideas of the RSCC unfold from requirement, to concept, to implementation. This paper will first review the role and operational approaches of SOF in the region and provides a baseline for the next section that will address the RSCC’s concept, intent, and organizational requirements. The paper will then provide recommendations and planning considerations for the RSCC’s design, development, and implementation, as well as criteria to assess organizational performance and success. Finally, the paper will conclude with observations on the RSCC’s support to the United States’ comprehensive, multidimensional strategy for the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and foster multilateral security cooperation.

Right Force, Right Approach, Right Region

SOF are “regionally oriented, culturally aware forces [that] provide a depth of expertise not available to the conventional forces” and allows them “to operate ‘in the seam’ between peace and war,”⁵ and across the range of military operations. SOF use two approaches – direct and indirect – to accomplish their specified mission tasks.⁶

The direct approach may entail SOF conducting kinetic, direct action missions against high value targets. The indirect approach, instead, may require SOF to perform non-kinetic, security force assistance activities to build multinational partner capacity and work by, with, and through foreign military forces, security elements, and populations to address shared threats and challenges. Using both approaches, separately or in combination, allow SOF to prepare and shape environments, and achieve their specific military objectives, while supporting diplomatic, informational, and economic efforts.

Admiral William McRaven, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)

Commander, testified SOF’s direct and indirect approaches remain complimentary and aligned to the changing strategic environment:

The direct approach [provides] the necessary means to disrupt [the] threat. . . the indirect approach is the complimentary element that can counter the systemic components of the threat. . . we must use this approach to strengthen and foster a network of mutually supporting partnerships that are based on shared security interests.”⁷

The indirect approach “relies heavily on the SOF capability to build host nation defense capacity” and “demands diplomacy and respect for political sensitivities.”⁸ Linda

Robinson, Adjunct Senior Fellow for U.S. National Security and Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, testified that SOF’s indirect approach activities will:

always be with or through other entities, so that they are empowered and eventually enabled to enact the solutions on their own. To achieve lasting,

decisive impact the activities cannot be episodic and unconnected but must be deliberately planned, linked and sustained via a campaign design that is nested in the larger theater and mission plans and overall U.S. policy goals.”⁹

Rotational and forward-based U.S. SOF, under the command and control of Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC), has successfully employed a focused, indirect approach to achieve U.S. security objectives in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

The RSCC, coupled with the indirect approach, will to enable U.S. SOF to establish and foster habitual security relationships with regional SOF and security forces¹⁰ within partner nations’ Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (Mol), build a robust network of U.S. interagency and mission partners¹¹, and create conditions to achieve U.S. and partner nation security objectives in the region.

RSCC – Regional Capability for a Global Vision

In accordance with the Defense Strategic Guidance, USSOCOM developed a series of initiatives intended to:

- Provide the Geographic Combatant Commands [GCC] improved SOF capacity by adding resources, capabilities, authorities, and force structure to the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs).
- Build a global network of SOF, which supports appropriate USG partners and partner nation SOF, to facilitate expanded situational awareness, persistent presence, and engagement where and when necessary.
- Evolve USSOCOM’s role as a Functional Combatant Command with global responsibilities – focused on supporting USG and GCC efforts to achieve U.S. strategic objectives around the globe with timely, regionally attuned, and superbly trained and equipped SOF.¹²

An RSCC is a central component of USSOCOM’s “Global SOF Network” comprised of U.S. interagency and partner nation SOF that “proactively anticipates threats and enables cooperative security solutions in cost-effective ways.”¹³ As a concept and initiative, an RSCC is:

multinational and interagency in nature [and] focused on improving multilateral SOF coordination and interoperability, providing SOF education and training, and improving operational capacities, competencies, and relationships among new and well-established partners at a regional level.¹⁴

USSOCOM modeled the RSCC after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) SOF Headquarters (NSHQ), as it provides a demonstrated capability “adapted to the realities of today as it typifies the potential of an integrated multinational approach.”¹⁵

During a July 2012 congressional hearing on “The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces,” Dr. Jacquelyn Davis of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) stated:

the most valuable attributes of the NSHQ is its capacity to facilitate networking among Special Operations Forces. This, in turn, contributes to building trust and confidence and in so doing demolishes obstacles that often get in the way of national bilateral or multilateral military planning.¹⁶

Dr. Davis further opined that despite the differences across regions:

the RSCC construct is applicable, with modifications, to other geographic regions in which SOF are operating . . . [and] the core elements of a SOF coordination center would be constant, with its objectives of promoting interoperability and building partner capacities that can be leveraged by the United States in emergencies.¹⁷

While many strategic planners, policy makers, and analysts highlight the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, unlike Europe, it does not have a NATO security alliance or European Union equivalent, based on the core principle of collective defense with a trans-Pacific link. Additionally, these groups often overlook unique, critical, and historical factors that influence the security settings and security cooperation. For the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, RSCC planning and implementation will test and demand that U.S. planners have a level of patience and sophisticated understanding of the changing regional environment, its unique characteristics, regional forces, institutions, and approaches toward national security and security cooperation.

Multilateral organizations and security architecture play an increasingly important role in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. However, Erin Williams and Brian Job opined that while regional nations and organizations continually acknowledge “the transnational nature of the threats confronting the Asia Pacific underscores the need for more robust multilateral cooperation,” it has “yet to translate into significant cooperation.”¹⁸ The region remains historically reliant upon U.S.-led bilateral security cooperation and challenged with routine multilateral cooperation. Additionally, multilateral cooperation within regional security organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remain hindered divergent security priorities and resolute trepidations over sovereignty and non-interference. Emotional matters of nationalism and historical animosities in Northeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia also influence security cooperation. Consequently, many nations “do not consider multilateral cooperation as the major vehicle for advancing their own security”¹⁹ and are often “concerned that closer cooperation with the U.S. or the regional states will provide a pretext for foreign interference into their internal affairs.”²⁰

An Indo-Asia-Pacific Approach - Unity “By, With, and Through” Diversity

As a purpose built and driven organization, the RSCC will be a small, operational-level, multinational SOF platform designed to connect, advise, and generate activities; not command, control, or direct operations. It will not replace regional defense organizations or violate existing command relationships. Instead, it will serve as a coordinating and advisory body for both U.S. and regional partner nations’ SOF and security forces. It will compliment and link U.S. and regional SOF security

cooperation activities delineated in USPACOM's Theater Strategy and Theater Campaign Plan (TCP) and U.S. country teams' Mission Strategic Resource Plans (MSRP), while enhancing regional SOF cooperation, capacity, and interoperability to address shared threats and concerns.

Three operational functions or lines of effort will constitute the RSCC's indirect approach: (1) Education and training focused on building SOF and security force capacity; (2) Coordination and engagement to expand and connect the SOF network; and (3) Information sharing and collaboration to encourage and foster multilateral security initiatives and trust.²¹ These are critical enablers and will guide the RSCC's design, coordination, and implementation. In addition, they will also serve as criteria to assess the RSCC's capabilities, approaches, processes, and effectiveness in activities designed to enhance multilateral SOF cooperation and result in cooperative security solutions to address shared security challenges and objectives.

Education and Training

The RSCC will serve as a regional "learning organization," as defined by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*, that "continually adapts to [its] environment and new knowledge" and "expands its capacity to create its future."²² As a learning organization, it will provide operational-level education and training to deliver knowledge among Indo-Asia-Pacific SOF and mission partners. It will also provide a systematic, collaborative structure to achieve a shared consciousness of common threats, detect seams and impediments to regional cooperation, and discern regional SOF's collective capacity. By viewing and understanding the security environment, through the eyes and diverse experiences of Indo-Asia-Pacific participants, the RSCC will develop an integrated

perspective of the region and appropriately advise, connect, and coordinate regional SOF's activities and initiatives.

Formalized SOF education and training, conducted at an unclassified-level, will afford a transparent, culturally diverse learning environment for multilateral participants to share, learn, and understand. The RSCC will deliver its education and training through resident courses, workshops, and regional outreach events will serve as operational-level forums for participants to openly discuss the precipitants of transnational threats and encourage critical, proactive, and creative thinking about their national security needs. The RSCC will tailor and focus courses and training events on such matters as piracy, violent insurgencies, and maritime security in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, combating terrorism, counter and de-radicalization programs, and asymmetric challenges in Southeast Asia, or disaster response and illicit trafficking in Northeast Asia. More importantly, the RSCC will also solicit participating members' perspectives to identify national-level and sub-regional SOF capabilities, limitations, experiences, and programs. Wide-ranging input and recommendations will increase participating members' awareness of regional and transnational security challenges, highlight national-level SOF activities and successes, develop common operational procedures, as well as guide course design to ensure curriculum and programs remain relevant and address the needs of regional SOF and security forces.

As a regional education and training hub, the RSCC will have the unique ability and opportunity to join SOF and security forces from Southeast Asia, South Asia, Northeast Asia, and Oceania. This will be important step toward enhancing multilateral SOF engagement, cooperation, and integration, especially as many nations' SOF and

security forces have not traditionally or cross-regionally trained together, due to legal restrictions, insufficient authorities, or limited resources. Additionally, the RSCC will virtually and physically distribute SOF education and training throughout the region to establish new security partnerships, expand knowledge, collaborate, and connect with other regional security centers, defense networks, and communities of interest. Given today's fiscal and resource constraints, it will be necessary and efficient to partner with other educational institutions to exchange topical and regional expertise, expand SOF best practices, and share lessons learned. Potential collaborative partnerships for the RSCC may include, but are not limited to, the Hawaii-based Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) and Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), USSOCOM's Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), the Naval Postgraduate School's Special Operations and Irregular Warfare Program, and other U.S. and regional partner defense academic institutions.

Coordination and Engagement

Persistent, patient, and meaningful engagement and coordination will be vital to sustain multilateral SOF and interagency attention, connection, and participation with the RSCC and in the region. The RSCC will, therefore, serve as a regional “dominant oscillator”²³ – setting the pace and providing the energy – to connect, broaden, and strengthen the network of regional SOF, security forces, and interagency partners.

Within the Asia-Pacific, U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) and Department of State requirements and authorities, governed and set forth under Title 10 and Title 22 U.S. code respectively, drive U.S. security cooperation and security assistance activities and programs. As a result, not all security relationships and sub-regional priorities in

the Indo-Asia-Pacific are equal and are often accorded less priority. This creates seams, stove-piped approaches, and “disconnects between PACOM’s regional priorities and SOCOM’s global priorities [of] counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and counter-WMD planning”²⁴ and U.S. country teams in the region. For this reason, the RSCC will operate as a strategic-operational linchpin between USSOCOM, USPACOM, U.S. country teams, and other interagency partners to ensure U.S. and multinational SOF activities remain linked, aligned, focused, and measurable to support global, regional, and country-level security cooperation requirements, plans, and objectives. The RSCC, through its formal education and training events, will have the ability to objectively, methodically, and iteratively identify and evaluate capacity gaps that participating nations’ SOF and security forces face in relation to their country’s defense and security sectors, as well as determine a partner nation’s ability to adopt, absorb, and accommodate new capabilities and capacities. In turn, the RSCC will recommend and tailor programs and processes that meet the interests of both the U.S. and regional nations to build the capacities of SOF and security forces to advance common regional goals, as well as ensure allies and partners are better able and postured to manage their respective security problems and will collectively work with other nations to address shared transnational threats.

The RSCC will also seek opportunities to engage and coordinate with official (Track One) and unofficial (Track Two) regional level dialogues, forums, meetings, and initiatives. Security forums and meetings at the Track Two level, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asian Pacific (CSCAP), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Global Counterterrorism Forum, and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM)

can “bridge the gap between the desire for multilateralism and the actual capacity to carry it out”²⁵ to address shared security concerns. For the RSCC, the Pacific Area Security Sector Working Group (PASSWG) may serve as an effective regional forum to advance its goals, objectives, and functions, as well as a vehicle to eventually inform and supplement other Track One and Track Two organizations and meetings. SOCPAC plans, coordinates, designs, and executes PASSWG as an unofficial regional, multilateral conference to increase cooperation and unity of effort among military, law enforcement, government, and interagency professional to “promote the exchange of information on regional trends and non-traditional security issues.”²⁶ The RSCC’s ability to leverage and integrate into PASSWG and other regional forums will allow it to remain cognizant of the official and unofficial security dialogue, identify channels for multilateral education, training, and coordination, and advocate for regional SOF initiatives, while informing and underscoring the capacity, legitimacy, and credibility of partner nations’ SOF activities.

Sharing and Collaborating

Information sharing and collaboration is a crosscutting function that will affect the RSCC’s education and training and operational-level coordination and engagement functions. The RSCC must, therefore, create an environment, infrastructure, and principles for transparent human and virtual information sharing and collaboration to increase communication, minimize misunderstanding, and enhance trust and respect between regional SOF and mission partners. Consequently, improving regional SOF information sharing and collaboration will originate within, and extend from the RSCC to its regional SOF and interagency partners.

The RSCC, as a small, co-located multinational SOF team with a common operational purpose, will enable its regional participants to work at the same location, at the same time, and with the same information drawn from diverse national-level and interagency sources and perspectives. Daily, routine staff interaction, iterative collaboration, and planning on shared security interests and threats will lead to the RSCC's staff and participants establishing personal, professional, and organizational relationships. These interactions and relationships are critical, as they will shape participants' attitudes and understanding of the value of exchanging information and experience, and moderate the persistent barriers to information sharing and collaboration – individual behavior and organizational culture.

A common, unclassified network will support the RSCC's effort to foster and institutionalize SOF information sharing and collaboration within the Center, as well as in its courses and workshops in the region. By establishing a collaborative information environment and infrastructure, the RSCC will technically connect and communicate with regional SOF participants. USSOCOM envisions a Coalition Global Network (CGN) for the RSCCs to share information, lessons learned, and experiences necessary to create a “common holistic understanding of regional issues” between multinational SOF and mission partners, and leverages “wide-ranging perspectives and skills to focus on regional problems that transcend borders.”²⁷ CGN remains a concept and other SOF specific systems are unavailable. Therefore, an initial, cost-saving approach may involve the RSCC using the existing, regional capabilities of the All Partners Access Network (APAN) or GlobalNET²⁸ that will allow widespread participation of regional SOF, security forces, and interagency partners to connect,

share, collaborate, coordinate, and plan with other Indo-Asia-Pacific security actors, experts, and communities of interest.

Technology alone, however, is not the solution, especially as for the RSCC to foster information sharing and collaboration, and to ultimately build trust between regional SOF and security forces. Trust will be necessary for productive, long-term regional security relationships. The RSCC must, therefore, reinforce any technical capability with a pervasive attitude, behavior, culture, and principles required to connect people and organizations, align processes and policies, and support the open exchange of multinational SOF information, knowledge, and experiences.

Design and Implementation

Beyond the RSCC's stated purpose, intent, and core functions rests the challenge of moving from concept to implementation. As a U.S. initiative, USSOCOM will "resource and facilitate RSCC establishment by representing the U.S. as the Framework Nation"²⁹ in partnership with USPACOM, SOCPAC, U.S. embassies, and other USG agencies. The actual responsibility for leading the RSCC design, development, and implementation, however, will rest with SOCPAC as the TSOC, with direct coordination, resourcing, and authorization from USSOCOM and USPACOM. This will allow SOCPAC to continue to plan, direct, and conduct special operations in the region, while leveraging its regional expertise and established security relationships to advance the RSCC initiative. It will also allow USSOCOM and USPACOM to maintain strategic oversight and guidance of the RSCC's implementation. More importantly, it will enable USSOCOM to execute and underwrite its Global SOF Network lines of effort in the region to improve special operations capacity and capability at

SOCPAC, build a global SOF network, and support USPACOM's efforts to achieve U.S. regional and strategic objectives.

Prototyped and Conditions-Based Approach

A small, dedicated composite team, drawn from SOCPAC, USSOCOM, and key allies will initially serve as the RSCC's staff and cadre to lead the planning and design efforts, establish the requisite consultations and engagements with U.S. and regional partners, and develop and execute education and training events. The staff will plan and operate in accordance to USSOCOM's guidance that an RSCC be "prototyped" and subsequently implemented through a "conditions-based" process.³⁰ For the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, designing and developing the RSCC as a prototype is a practical and measured method, as it will lead the RSCC staff to work through, by, and with allied and partner nations, U.S. interagency, and mission partners in the implementation process.

Finding the Common Ground

In designing and creating any new organization, research and analysis is required to determine the gaps between what exists versus what is needed. Therefore, the RSCC staff will research, review, and resolve key issues and requirements that will shape and influence organizational options and affect implementation such as partner nation policies and agreements, regional SOF capacities and requirements, and viable site locations. This is imperative, especially as the RSCC represents a U.S. concept and initiative, but its design, implementation, and operational effectiveness are contingent upon multinational commitment, shared security interests, and a common framework.

The identification and selection of capable, willing, and suitable partner nations will be critical in building and sustaining an effective multilateral team. Partner nations' ability to "collectively address their common security challenges" and the "willingness of regional nations to consider a centralized approach for the coordination and deconfliction of SOF efforts" will serve as criteria to ascertain their commitment to the RSCC and inclination to operate under a mutually agreed charter.³¹ A charter is necessary, as it will delineate "common objectives, structure, and workings of the RSCC,"³² as well as stipulate organizational procedures, performance metrics, and standards for the multinational participants. These will serve as important criteria to ensure all multinational SOF and security force participants will be actual stakeholders with the resolve to share the responsibility, burden, and goals of advancing multilateral cooperation, interoperability, and information sharing.

The RSCC staff and cadre will also identify shared interests, threats, and challenges among participants, upon which to build common points in multilateral security dialogue and cooperation. As the region hosts and confronts irregular and transnational threats, and stands "as a battle between globalization and backward nationalism,"³³ David Fouse advises that it is important to "not to focus on any one particular transnational threat but rather to understand the overlapping and interactive effects that various challenges can pose at the individual, national and global levels."³⁴ As a result, the RSCC staff and its security partners must identify areas outside of traditional, contested state-centric and conventional security matters that will "cultivate cooperation where interests overlap while building up influential groups within [Asia-Pacific] states who have knowledge of and stakes in expanding security cooperation."³⁵

The shared interests mandatory to coalesce multilateral attention, perspectives, and ultimately action will be based on the nexus of national, trans-national, and non-traditional security threats. The challenge will be to identify threats which “cloak themselves in the human activity of the modern, increasingly, interdependent, and virtually connected world”³⁶ such as terrorism, violent extremism, piracy, weapons and human trafficking, disruptive technology, and other “problems without passports”³⁷ that directly affect the security within a specific country or across the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

A common framework and shared security interests will provide the RSCC staff guidelines for decision-making, a sense of direction for RSCC participants and mission partners, and the base required for the organization to execute its mission and operational functions. Since the RSCC will serve as a regional hub for multilateral security force education, collaboration, and information sharing, then a prototype program built upon a sequence of developmental workshops will serve as the means for the RSCC staff to:

- Consult with and gain the perspectives and feedback of partner nation SOF and security forces on the RSCC initiative, implementation, and charter
- Identify and evaluate shared security threats, issues, and challenges
- Design and develop a pilot course curriculum with multinational input
- Develop an extensive network and community of operational-level SOF and security forces
- Determine requisite authorities, manning, resourcing, logistics, technical, and education and training requirements. Requirements will initially fall within existing U.S. authorities and resources, but must eventually transition into allied and partner nation channels to advance the RSCC initiative
- Solicit support for multilateral activities and commitment of personnel to the

RSCC, as well as identify a suitable, willing host nation

- Drive U.S. and partner nation efforts to align national policies and progress towards government-level review and approval of the RSCC

Aggregating and channeling the diverse perspectives of regional SOF, security forces, and mission partners will reveal key areas of convergence and divergence regarding threats and challenges, capacity and capability gaps, and the RSCC initiative. A collective survey of the region's political, defense, and security sectors will also determine how fiscal and resource constraints will affect partner nation support for the RSCC, assess multilateral security initiatives and capabilities that may be leveraged to support the RSCC's design and establishment, and identify a location for the RSCC that "promotes maximum regional participation."³⁸ Given the absence of an overarching Indo-Asia-Pacific security alliance, framework, and organization, these factors will require periodic assessments to determine their individual and collective impact on the implementation of the RSCC. The RSCC's site location and ability to leverage existing regional capabilities are two factors that will warrant early dialogue, feedback, and analysis between the RSCC staff and regional partners to support the RSCC's timely implementation.

Site Location – Regional Access and Placement

USSOCOM envisions implementing and positioning RSCCs in "suitable locations around the world."³⁹ Options for the RSCC may include, but are not limited to a U.S. territory and a partner nation in the region. Accordingly, close coordination between the U.S. and regional defense and diplomatic partners is essential to identify and select a site that will foster allied and partner nation participation and a host nation willing to share the responsibility and burden of advancing multilateral SOF cooperation. The

RSCC's access and placement in the region will also affect its ability to coordinate, collaborate, and partner with other regional security organizations.

During a USSOCOM - Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) workshop, focused on capacity building and security cooperation in the region, U.S. defense, diplomatic, interagency, and academic representatives stressed the importance of positioning an RSCC in the region. Participants recommended host nation options such as Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore be considered and pursued, with the latter identified as an "ideal location for RSCC establishment" that serves as a "gathering point" for regional security dialogue and forums.⁴⁰ These options were exclusively based on a U.S. perspective. While it is important for the U.S. to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze regional nations' defense sectors to determine their level of alignment with the U.S., risk of political instability, and other economic, social, and cultural factors, a site location and host nation must be viewed, informed, and understood through the national interests, perspectives, and concerns of regional participants.

Consider the case of Japan's initiative in 2001 to establish an anti-piracy cooperation agreement and position a multilateral security organization in the region. Japan's formally engaged, negotiated, and coordinated with other regional nations over the course of several years to reach a government-level concurrence for the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in 2004.⁴¹ ReCAAP, through its Information Sharing Center (ISC), exchanges information on incidents of piracy and armed robbery, supports capacity building, and provides cooperative agreements among 17 participating nations.⁴² The

ReCAAP ISC is located in Singapore, led by a Japanese director, and supported by a multilateral staff.⁴³ However, despite having 17 member countries, ReCAPP still lacks two key littoral states – Indonesia and Malaysia – as they protested and declined to sign the government-level security agreement based on their “displeasure of the decision to set up the ISC in Singapore.”⁴⁴ Japan’s initiative and experience to establish a regional anti-piracy framework and ISC capability does not necessarily portend complications for the U.S. initiative to implement the RSCC and situated in the region. It does, however, offer key planning considerations to address with regional partners during the RSCC’s prototype programs, especially if they will affect a nation’s level of interest, support, and participation, despite the merits of the security initiative or recognition of shared security issues.

Provisional Approach – Think Regionally, Act Locally

The RSCC’s proof of concept and prototype programs of sequenced workshops will facilitate multilateral staff coordination and negotiations for a site location and host nation options, either on a long-term or rotational basis, while simultaneously working towards a short-term, feasible, and suitable option to establish the RSCC and initiate multilateral SOF education, training, and engagement events.

An interim option to fast-track implementation may entail positioning the RSCC in Hawaii, as a U.S. sponsored activity, and establishing a collaborative and supporting partnership with the APCSS to serve as an “anchor for RSCC development.”⁴⁵ Locating the RSCC initially in Hawaii will afford the necessary foundation to establish the RSCC’s organizational and operational capability until it can be relocated further into the region. Clear disadvantages to Hawaii and partnering with the APCSS are the RSCC will not be

in the “heart” of the region and it will have “more of a U.S. feel” than an RSCC located in the region.⁴⁶ These disadvantages, however, have not affected APCSS’ ability and effectiveness as U.S. DoD academic institute in the region. Hawaii’s position midway between the U.S. mainland and the Indo-Asia-Pacific region will afford the RSCC a neutral location to conduct operational-level security force education and access to existing and necessary capabilities, facilities, expertise, and infrastructure.

Furthermore, there is power in combinations, as a partnership with APCSS will afford the RSCC an opportunity to link to, integrate with, and learn from a well-established regional paragon that successfully conducts executive-level security education and information exchanges to build capacities and communities of interest by “educating, connecting, and empowering” security practitioners to advance Asia-Pacific security.⁴⁷

In the short to mid-term, a collaborative, supporting partnership will allow the RSCC’s cadre and staff to learn, adopt, and adapt APCSS’ proven techniques, standards, processes, and lessons learned for developing and executing security education programs, as well as best practices for administering student, alumni, logistics, and facility affairs. A partnership will also mitigate the cold start challenges inherent with new organizations and assist the RSCC in quickly initiating its resident SOF education events, while maturing its organizational functionality, gaining additional authorities and resources, and increasing its relevance and credibility within the region. Moreover, it will afford the RSCC the time and space necessary to integrate regional partners, progress towards initial and full operating capability, and set the terms and conditions to eventually reposition the RSCC and transition the lead nation responsibility, on a rotational or long-term basis, to another partner nation.

In the mid to long-term, a partnership will create opportunities and efficiencies for both the RSCC and APCSS to coordinate and connect select multinational education activities and events, and align resource to advance their respective organizational missions. Moreover, the RSCC and APCSS' activities will complement each other by educating security practitioners, exchanging information, and building capacities at the multilateral operational and strategic-levels, respectively, to foster trust and confidence among current and future leaders in the region. These activities, individually and collectively, will mutually support USPACOM's theater campaign plan and objectives.

It is important to underscore that any formal or informal partnership between the RSCC and APCSS will necessitate detailed negotiations and an agreement to determine, delineate, and balance requisite faculty, facility, resource, and support requirements. In addition, emphasis must be placed to ensure each organization retains and exercises its respective identity, autonomy, authorities, and approvals. Any partnership, therefore, must not impact the RSCC's operational-level mission and implementation or detract from APCSS' strategic-level non-warfighting mission. In addition, a partnership must not undermine, but compliment APCSS' capability, reputation, and credibility in the region.

Keeping Score – Measuring Progress

As the RSCC transitions from design to implementation, it will also identify and develop performance categories, metrics, and indicators that correlate to its three core functions – Education and Training, Coordination and Engagement, Information Sharing and Collaboration – to assess organizational performance and progress towards organizational goals and objectives. Evaluating the RSCC's overall effectiveness, as a

learning organization and new regional security organization, will be important, especially as it executes multiple functions, pursues multiple goals, and cooperates with multiple nations across the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Continuous monitoring and periodic assessment of the core functions will be essential to assist the RSCC staff and multinational partners in evaluating, reflecting, and determining what works and what does not work, organizationally and operationally, and how to execute, promote, and sustain the RSCC's mission and objectives in a joint, interagency, and multilateral environment.

Similar to identifying shared interests and developing a common framework, it is imperative that the RSCC identify and select performance indicators and metrics based on the dialog with and input from allied and partner nations in order to integrate them into the RSCC's mutually-agreed charter. This will ensure acceptance of and ownership by all multinational participants, as contributor to and clients of the RSCC, and establish a necessary link between the RSCC and partner nations' security framework, plans, programs, and objectives. This will also ensure the RSCC, initially led and sponsored by the U.S., avoids the inclination to oriented toward and fixate on immediate results and efficiencies of the RSCC's activities. This will, instead, lead the RSCC and its regional SOF participants to balance the core functions' current performance indicators with process and effectiveness related indicators. A balanced approach will assist the RSCC and its participants in answering internal process (Are we doing things right?) and performance-based questions such as:

- Does the RSCC, as a learning organization, remain adaptive, attuned to its environment, and conducive to a culture and practice of openness, transparency, and participation?

- Did the RSCC education course/workshop increase the awareness of regional and transnational threats, challenges, and implications among its multinational SOF, security actor, and interagency participants? Did the course/workshop meet the operational needs and strategic expectations of regional participants?
- Do the RSCC cadre and staff, operating as multinational team, execute multilateral training events in accordance with set tasks, conditions, standards, as well as follow organizational values and principles?
- Has the daily, routine interaction, collaboration, and planning enhanced the exchange of information and sharing of knowledge between the RSCC cadre and staff? If so, have personal, professional, and organizational relationships been fostered and developed? What has the multinational staff and cadre learned about working together?

A balanced approach will also offer insight regarding the process indicators and metrics developed to determine the RSCC's external effects (Are we doing the right things?), prospects of long-term support, and answer questions such as:

- Did the adoption and acceptance of the RSCC's mutually agreed charter by allied and partner nations enhance their operational-level SOF and security force interoperability, capacity, standardization, and cooperation?
- Are participating nations meeting their roles, responsibilities, requirements, and sharing the burden in accordance to the RSCC's charter and mission?
- Has the RSCC and its activities influenced allied or partner nation SOF and security forces to reassess, reprioritize, and readdress their security priorities, capabilities, plans, and programs in relation to regional and transnational threats?
- Is the RSCC, through its activities and core functions, changing partner nation perspectives and behaviors, both positively and negatively, regarding the need for increased situational awareness, multilateral security cooperation, habitual and sustained engagement, and collective action?
- Do the RSCC and its activities attract the right type and right level of regional SOF, security actor, and interagency participation and commitment? Is the RSCC missing key allies and partners, as both contributors and customers? If so, why?
- Has the RSCC achieved the objectives identified in USPACOM's TCP or USSOCOM's Global SOF Network and priorities?

While these metrics and indicators will assist in assessing the effectiveness and performance of the RSCC, they will also aid in monitoring and measuring partner nation SOF actions and inactions and changes in behavior resulting from RSCC activities, programs, and recommendations, and will provide a definitive measure of progress with multilateral SOF cooperation. Constant dialog and interaction within the RSCC staff and with its regional SOF and security force partners will provide firsthand insight and a forecast of expected decisions, actions, and responses from partner nation SOF and security forces. A subsequent comparison, however, between RSCC activities and recommendations versus allied and partner nation actions and responses will be a measure of RSCC success, if both are aligned. Variances between partner nation actions and RSCC efforts and recommendations will require recurring analyses to determine why these differences exist and provide feedback to refine or reshape the RSCC's activities and functions, and if required, recalibrate the indirect approach.

Conclusion

Over the last year, the U.S. strategic rebalance has created more uncertainty, than clarity in terms of actual U.S. goals, objectives, and interests in the region. This uncertainty continues to fuel a debate among Indo-Asia-Pacific states to discern the vagueness and rhetorical nature of U.S. policy for such a complex, dynamic, and important region. Dr. Rouben Azizian advises that whether the region's future is branded as confrontational or cooperative will be "determined in large part by the region's ability to promote and enhance confidence building measures and construct effective multinational institutions for integration, collaboration, and cooperative problem solving."⁴⁸

The RSCC is an innovative measure and construct that will enable the U.S. to transition from policy discussions and aspirations to policy actions and results, as it will support the defense component of the U.S. strategic rebalance and serve as an operational-level engine for persistent multilateral integration, collaboration, cooperation, and capacity building. The RSCC's core functions, individually and collectively, will serve as critical enablers to provide a systematic, collaborative means to evaluate the performance of a multinational SOF organization, assess the security environment in order to attain a shared consciousness of transnational threats, detect seams and impediments to partner nations and regional cooperation, and reach a common level of regional SOF capacity and interoperability performance.

The RSCC will survey and service the entire Indo-Asia-Pacific region, not constrained by limited focus on selected sub-regions or against specific states. As such, it will be inclusive, not exclusive, and will seek to provide equal benefits to all regional nations regardless of size and status. It will allow the U.S. to reinforce existing alliances and relationships, foster new security and collaborative partnerships, and develop a multilateral capability and capacity to understand and proactively address the current and future regional and transnational security challenges confronting the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. The RSCC will also serve as an active regional fulcrum to advance USPACOM's TCP, USSOCOM's Global SOF Network, and U.S. Country teams' security cooperation efforts. More importantly, the RSCC will increase the awareness and understanding of regional SOF and security force initiatives, while highlighting and advocating the capacity, legitimacy, and credibility of partner nations' activities and programs.

The RSCC is a bold and ambitious U.S. construct and initiative, both regionally and globally. Despite the inherent realities and challenges of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, the RSCC architecture and its core functions, combined with the indirect approach, are not only applicable, but also timely and necessary to advance U.S. interests and defense objectives in the region. Using an interactive, collaborative, transparent, and cooperative approach, the RSCC will pursue multilateral unity “by, with, and through,” multinational diversity.

Endnotes

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² Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy* (November 2011), 58, 61.

³ U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, *Statement by General Charles R. Holland, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, On the State of Special Operations Forces*, 107th Cong., 2nd sess., March 12, 2002, 8.

⁶ Over the last several years, there has been a continued debate on the future of Special Operations Forces and the prioritization and application of and balance between the direct and indirect approaches. See, for example, U.S. Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Future of Special Operations Force, *Testimony on Special Operations Forces, offered by Christopher J. Lamb, Distinguished Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University*, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., July 11, 2012 and Linda Robinson, “The Future of Special Operations: Beyond Kill and Capture,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2012), 110-122.

⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander, United States Special Operations Command*, 112th Cong., 1st sess., March 22, 2012, 6-7.

⁸ David P. Fridovich and Fred T. Krawchuk, "Winning in the Pacific: The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 44 (1st Quarter, 2007), 24.

⁹ U.S. Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Future of Special Operations Force, *Testimony on Special Operations Forces*, offered by Linda Robinson, Adjunct Senior Fellow for U.S. National Security and Foreign Policy Council on Foreign Relations, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., July 11, 2012.

¹⁰ Security forces include any conventional military forces, police/constabulary forces, border forces, and other paramilitary organizations at all levels of government within a nation that the U.S. SOF and the RSCC may engage, cooperate, and collaborate with in the execution of its mission. See also U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Foreign Internal Defense*, Joint Publication 3-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 12, 2010).

¹¹ Mission partners are those with whom the RSCC will engage, cooperate, and collaborate with in the execution its multilateral mission, such as regional and multinational organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector.

¹² U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), "The Global SOF Network," Tampa, FL, U.S. Special Operations Command, March 22, 2102, 2-3.

¹³ USSOCOM, "The Global SOF Network," 3-4.

¹⁴ U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), "Regional Special Operations Forces (SOF) Coordination Center White Paper," Tampa, FL, U.S. Special Operations Command, March 27, 2012, 1.

¹⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, *Posture Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander, United States Special Operations Command*, 112th Congress, 1st session, March 22, 2012, 12.

¹⁶ U.S. Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Future of Special Operations Forces, *Statement of Dr. Jacquelyn K. Davis, Executive Vice President, Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis*, 112th Congress, 2nd Session, July 11, 2012.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Erin E. Williams and Brian L. Job, "The Imperative of Multilateral Security Cooperation," *Security Through Cooperation: Furthering Asia Pacific Multilateral Engagement*, Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, Vancouver, Canada, 2007, 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁰ Rizal Sukma, "National Successes and Regional Deficits in Southeast Asia's Battle against Terrorism and Insurgency," *Security Through Cooperation: Furthering Asia Pacific Multilateral Engagement*, Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, Vancouver, Canada, 2007, 29.

²¹ USSOCOM, “Regional SOF Coordination Center White Paper,” 2. The RSCC’s operational functions are modified to support the indirect approach with regional SOF partners in the Indo-Asia-Pacific security environment, but remain consistent with USSOCOM’s identified core functions of coordinating multinational SOF efforts, enhancing interoperable SOF capabilities among partners, and fostering information sharing among contributing partners.

²² Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 14.

²³ Karlin Sloan with Lindsey Polk, *Smarter, Faster, Better: Strategies for Effective, Enduring, and Fulfilled Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 158-159. Dominant oscillator is an electronic and biological term for the feature of a system that controls the rest of its cycles; author uses “dominant oscillator” as a metaphor for leadership and pacing.

²⁴ Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA), “Capacity-Building and Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Implications for U.S. SOCOM and Special Operations Planning,” *An After-Action Report from a SOCOM-IFPA Workshop on July 13, 2012*, Washington, DC, August 2012, 7.

²⁵ Ibid., 1.

²⁶ Pacific Area Security Sector Working Group (PASSWG) homepage , <http://community.apan.org/aces/passwg/site/default.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013)

²⁷ USSOCOM, “Regional SOF Coordination Center White Paper,” 2, 3.

²⁸ All Partners Access Network (APAN) is a non-military network that connects regional partners, promotes information exchanges, and fosters collaboration between DoD and any external country, organization, or individual. <https://community.apan.org/default.aspx> (accessed December 21, 2012). GlobalNET is another network that designed to foster national and international collaboration, build partner capacity, and maintain relationships. APCSS uses the network to support its mission. <https://www.apcsslink.org/about-globalnet> (accessed December 17, 2012).

²⁹ USSOCOM, “Regional SOF Coordination Center White Paper,” 3.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Ibid.

³³ Paul Bracken, *Fire in the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), xxiii.

³⁴ David Fouse, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Issues for Engagement: Asian Perspectives on Transnational Security Challenges* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2010), 6-7.

³⁵ Michael Mazaar, "The Angry Pacific: Why the United States is not ready for conflict in Asia," http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/02/angry_pacific, November 2, 2012, (accessed on 8 November 2012).

³⁶ U.S. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, August 31, 2012) 3.

³⁷ Kofi A. Annan, "Problems without Passports," *Foreign Policy* 132 (September/October 2002), 30. Term used by the former United Nations Secretary-General to describe the impact of globalization, the positive and negative changes to society, politics, and technology, and the creation of common threats and challenges.

³⁸ USSOCOM, "Regional SOF Coordination Center White Paper," 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁰ IFPA, *After-Action Report from a SOCOM-IFPA Workshop on July 13, 2012*, 8.

⁴¹ Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), <http://www.recaap.org> (accessed February 15, 2013).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Xu Ke, "Myth and Reality: The Rise and Fall of Contemporary Maritime Piracy in the South China Sea," *Maritime Security in the South China Sea: Regional Implications and International Cooperation*, ed. Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 97.

⁴⁴ Yann-huei Song, "Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) and Enhancing Security in the Straits of Malacca: Littoral States and Regional Responses," *Maritime Security in the South China Sea: Regional Implications and International Cooperation*, ed. Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 130.

⁴⁵ IFPA, *After-Action Report from a SOCOM-IFPA Workshop on July 13, 2012*, 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) Mission and Vision homepage, <http://www.apcss.org/about-2/mission> (accessed February 20, 2013).

⁴⁸ Rouben Azizian, Topic Overview "Confidence Building Measure and Regional Organizations," Comprehensive Crisis Management (CCM) Course 12-1, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, HI, 7 September 2012.

